
Toward a Christian Sociology: Pragmatism and Shailer Mathews

David G. LoConto, New Mexico State University

Abstract

Early American sociology focused on morality and utopia as key elements in its underlying assumptions and goals. Yet the fledgling discipline struggled to agree on how to proceed. Differing perspectives from a diverse body of scholars led sociology through an amorphous beginning. For some, sociology was a means of intervention that would lead to social progress. For others, sociology was the advocate for laissez-faire policies that would allow natural laws to lead to a utopia. The goal of this paper is to demonstrate how the origins of American sociology and many of the early social thinkers in America, specifically the pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce, was consistent with and influenced the ideas of Shailer Mathews and his quest for a Christian sociology. Focusing on the connection with pragmatism, a Christian sociology from Mathews' perspective would recognize that 1) there is a foundation for all that is, specifically a divine being; 2) that process is the guiding force found within all existence; 3) that humans were created to be social; 4) that one cannot differentiate between the individual and society; 5) that the group is an intrinsic part of natural law; and lastly, 6) that morals emerge from the processes found in the universe.

Keywords: Christian Sociology, pragmatism, Shailer Mathews, Jesus, process, social

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From the inception of sociology as a discipline, morality and utopia were key elements of its underlying assumptions. For sociology to create a better world, there would have to be some explanation or definition of right and wrong (Barnes 1948). The viability of a discipline that could stand on its own apart from the physical sciences was advocated (Ellwood 1910). For some, sociology was a means of intervention that would lead to social progress (Ward 1883). For Social Darwinists, sociology would take a more hands-off approach to reach a similar positive end (Spencer 1857; 1864; Sumner 1883; 1910; 1913). Still others began integrating the pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce to strike a balance of natural laws and processes while allowing for individual perception (see Angell 1903; Dewey 1896; Peirce 1934). Regardless, the early sociologists trusted that there was an objective world and that natural laws dictated what was right and wrong.

The current work addresses an aspect of this issue, focusing on the work of Shailer Mathews and his attempt to create a Christian sociology in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In doing so he integrated the ideas of Charles Sanders Peirce and other pragmatist philosophers with his own in defining the world and how morality and ethics, that is issues of right and wrong, could be addressed. Mathews demonstrated this through identifying three themes: interconnectedness, social justice, and transformation. Together these themes provided a foundation for a Christian sociology based on pragmatism. What follows here is an elucidation of a foundation for a Christian sociology, touching upon Social Darwinism, Pragmatism, Christian sociology, and the ideas of Shailer Mathews.

Origins of American Sociology

Sociology in the United States evolved differently than in Europe (Barnes 1948). While both made references to Auguste Comte, who coined the term sociology and is viewed as the founder of the discipline, for sociologists in the United States there was little knowledge of any other founder(s). Though Henry Hughes and George Fitzhugh wrote the first two books using 'sociology' in the title, their knowledge of sociology was garnered only from their reading of Comte (Bernard 1937; Fitzhugh 1854; Hughes 1854). When Lester Ward wrote his *Dynamics of Sociology* in 1883, he knew of Comte as well as Thomas Hobbes, but of little else occurring in Europe (Ellwood 1939). Early American sociologists and Social Darwinists, William Sumner and Franklin Giddings were influenced in the late 1800s largely by social thinkers Herbert Spencer as well as Harriet Martineau, who focused on the need for a laissez-faire philosophy to adapt and adjust to the world (Small 1924; Sumner 1913). The next European to make an impact on American sociology beyond Comte, Spencer, and Martineau was Ludwig Gumplowicz (Barnes

1948). His Social Darwinist leanings were read by sociology students throughout the United States long before they read Simmel, Marx, Durkheim, or Weber (Barnes 1948; Small 1924). The same can be said of his counterpart Gustav Ratzenhofer (Barnes 1948; Ellwood 1939), yet neither is mentioned regarding the origins of American sociology today.

However, by 1895 sociology had taken root with the advent of the *American Journal of Sociology* (Small 1924). With the world changing rapidly, people were asking questions that had not been addressed by academics (Bernard and Bernard 1943; Hofstadter 1992). Sociology's impetus was "little more than an assertion that all the traditional ways of interpreting human experience were futile. Thereupon sociology became an assertion of intention to invent new and better ways to take the place of old ones" (Small 1924:335). The direction civilization was heading was considered questionable at best. Drawing on Comte, these early sociologists believed that sociology could lead to superior remedies that would alleviate all the problems of humanity. Such wide-reaching solutions would culminate in the formation of a utopian society for all (Bernard and Bernard 1943; LeConte 1888; Small 1924; Ward 1883).

Albion Small defined sociology as "a systematic study of society" (1897:149). He believed it to be a science that was to evolve and take the form of all other recognized sciences. Sociology would be objective and accepting of the logical inheritance found within all physical sciences (Small 1897; 1924). Therefore, sociologists would strive to be impartial in their analyses. As Small stated,

It is stupid and costly to let our thoughts about society be vague or wrong or partial. To live well, people need to understand the circumstances that surround our attempts to live. The sociologists propose . . . to develop the power and the habit of seeing society, and seeing into society, and seeing through and around society, for the sake of power to see beyond society as it exists today and into social conditions that may be desirable and possible tomorrow (1897:149).

The objective of most sociologists at this time was to use sociology to make the world a better place (Ellwood 1910; 1925; Hobhouse 1922; 1969; House 1936; Small 1916; 1924). To obtain such an objective, sociologists were to use not only thought, but also action (Ellwood 1910; 1925; Hobhouse 1922; 1969; Small 1897; 1916). This was true even with those that would take a laissez-faire approach, where sociology would be used to convince those in power, as well as the masses, that the best solution to a problem is not to interfere with its processes, but to simply let the natural processes evolve (Sumner 1883; 1913).

The focus of research was to be on society as a whole and to demonstrate the interconnectedness of all people (Bannister 1987). As Small stated, "we should find that all

persons are associated persons. This discovery brings with it two results: first, to know the individual we shall have to follow him out of himself into his correlations with others; second, to know the correlations which are constituted by associations of men we must know their elements, insofar as these are located in the make-up of the individuals who produce the associations” (1897:158). The key to this statement can be found in the connection that Small makes between the individual and society. Superficially, such a statement may not seem that grand, however, it is consistent with the philosophy of the day.

Prior social philosophy held that everything was interconnected (Fitzhugh 1854; Giddings 1898; Hughes 1854; Ward 1883). This was a component of the imperative that sociologists be well read in all fields of study (Ellwood 1918; House 1936; Sorokin 1956). To understand the whole of existence was thought to be paramount in understanding the natural laws within which humans operated (Dewey 1896; Follett 1918; Giddings 1898; Mead 1897; Small 1924; Sumner 1910). In placing humans within the structure of natural law, a logical connection between those in the social sciences and those in the physical sciences was created. Natural law was thought to be applicable to everything. Philosophically, the choices of the day were often considered limited to Social Darwinism or pragmatism (Hofstadter 1992). Both views typically took a realist position.

Social Darwinism

The Social Darwinian claim of the ‘survival of the fittest’, that is, the idea that some groups of people have more wealth and power in society because they are innately better, emerged through the writings of Spencer, Sumner, Giddings, and Gumplowicz, however, this line of thinking had been popular since the days of Adam Smith (Fitzhugh 1854; Giddings 1898; Gumplowicz 1898; Hughes 1854; Spencer 1864; Sumner 1883). Such ideas came from the integration of economics, biology, and physics (Bernard 1930; Hofstadter 1992). Herbert Spencer gained the greatest notoriety from this view. His goal was to form an inter-connection within the whole. His view was that science had successfully demonstrated a self-contained universe where matter and energy did little more than continually change forms (Hofstadter 1992). Organic life became the by-product of this process, and in turn, developed intelligence. Though this view was not peculiar to Social Darwinists, Spencer became the most prominent within sociology to use evolution to explain existence.

From Spencer’s point of view, with the persistence of force, anything that is homogeneous is inherently unstable (Hofstadter 1992). This is due in part to the persistence of force being inconsistent with all parts of the whole. Something that is homogeneous cannot

sustain itself, thus resulting in the death of the organism. In relation to something as diverse as a civilization, it can adapt and adjust, and thus evolve and give rise to a utopia (Spencer 1864). Therefore, in the view of Spencer and the Social Darwinists, to remain static is to die. However, adaptation cannot be orchestrated through human laws, because laws themselves are static. Instead, the role of the state is to ensure that people's freedoms do not become curbed artificially. If civilizations are then allowed to develop according to nature, they would be the strongest and most developed possible (Spencer 1864).

Social Darwinism also had supporters among Christians (Bernard and Bernard 1943; Hofstadter 1992). Between the time of Galileo and Comte, many Christians had come to believe that science validated Christianity, a ubiquitous view which permeated through the late 1800s. Such a viewpoint was found mainly among those who believed in predestination, and those that felt that life was hard and demanding (Hofstadter 1992; Weber 1958). Further, those who worked hard were thought to be approved by God. These persons were thought to be the faithful, and the saved. In contrast, those who spent their time in leisure and waste were disparaged. As the Social Darwinists of the day advocated, "economic life was construed as a set of arrangements that offered inducements to men of good character, while it punished those who were . . . negligent, shiftless, inefficient, silly, and imprudent" (Hofstadter 1992:10-11).

It was clear then for some Christians that since God had created natural laws, it was the role of humans to recognize such laws (Fitzhugh 1854; Hughes 1854; LeConte 1888; Spencer 1857; Sumner 1883). Natural selection was viewed as applicable to all things, including humans. The most prudent method of identifying who the chosen peoples were was to identify those that were wealthier among the general population (Weber 1958). The fact that many of these individuals were recipients of inheritance only bolstered the argument that these individuals were the result of good breeding (Sumner 1883). Both Spencer and Sumner, as well as other Social Darwinists, advocated "personal providence, family loyalty and family responsibility, hard work, careful management, and proud self-sufficiency" (Hofstadter 1992:12). The belief that these rules or laws were handed down from God only demonstrated further that these individuals were not only the best of the best, but were the most qualified to lead the country and to divine (or discern) the norms by which people should live (Sumner 1883; 1910).

Pragmatism

The counter to Social Darwinism was found in the pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce (Hofstadter 1992). In this, Mathews could connect with mainstream sociology. More liberal in

its approach than Social Darwinism, parts of this philosophy were accepted or integrated into many aspects of the social sciences and humanities, as well as Christian intellectual circles. Often arguing against Cartesian dualism, some of Peirce's ideas found a home at the University of Chicago through the works of many of the philosophers and social scientists there. John Dewey, James Angell, George Herbert Mead, and others paved the way philosophically and theoretically. Unlike those with social constructionist ideas today, they believed that there was a reality and it was knowable (Angell 1897; 1903; Dewey 1929; 1958; Mead 1926; 1929). They agreed with Peirce who said that anything unknowable was nothing more than heresy, and they dismissed the idea that experience is all people know (Peirce 1934). Instead, Peirce suggested something more profound than the explanations of experience offered by nominalist sociologists. He referred to something more complex that would later become identified in the works of both Dewey and Mead as a stratified nature of reality, allowing for diverse forms of possibilities (see also Dewey 1929; 1958; Mead 1926; 1929).

This form of pragmatism acknowledges that there is a reality, and that it is 'real' and knowable. Peirce defined pragmatism as to "consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then the whole of our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (Peirce 1934:281-282). This is a holistic definition of understanding and goes beyond simple experience. The solution to a problem must consider "a real fact and not a mere state of mind" (Peirce 1934:18). As scientists, philosophers, and theorists, we must "open our mental eyes and look well at the phenomenon and say what are the characteristics that are never wanting in it, whether that phenomenon be something that outward experience forces upon our attention, or whether it be the most abstract and general of the conclusions of science" (Peirce 1934:29). In other words, "the entire intellectual purport of any symbol consists in the total of all general modes of rational conduct which, conditionally upon all possible different circumstances and desires, would ensue upon the acceptance of the symbol" (1934:293). This approach (or view) is consistent with both Dewey and Mead. Seeing a connection between knowledge and truth, Dewey stated "that there is complete correspondence between knowledge in its true meaning and what is real" (1929:21). Likewise, Mead wrote that "when there was but one recognized order of nature, possibility had no other place than in the mental constructions of the future or the incompletely known past" (Mead 1926:84). However, "it is important to recognize that this world is not made up out of these individual experiences. They lie within this world. If it were made up of such individual experiences, it would lose all its reality" (Mead 1931:101). This statement reflects the image of the world of pragmatists who incorporated the physics of Einstein, Heisenberg, and Bohr to demonstrate that reality was multifaceted and pluralistic, not

linear and singular. Therefore, they provided an alternative to Social Darwinism.

Peirce, Dewey, and Mead account for the world as a series of states, contexts, or systems with a reality that is diverse, not singular. In any given state, context, or system there are numerous avenues that one can choose, yet there is no infinite amount of choices (Dewey 1929). Instead, objective reality or truth can be found by examining the diversity of characteristics, options, and opportunities available at any one time, not the simplifications of reducing it to personal experience (Dewey 1894; 1895; 1896; 1929; 1958; Mead 1894; 1894a; 1895; 1897; 1909; 1926; 1929; 1931; Peirce 1934; 1934a; Rucker 1969). If this were relegated to simply its effects, we would be left open to constructionist ideas such as Thomas and Thomas's 'Definition of the Situation', or Herbert Blumer's 'Symbolic Interactionism' which suggest that reality is simply how people define the world around them. Instead, Dewey uses his knowledge of physics and the possibilities in any given state, context, or system to argue for a satisfactory end which represents that reality, a change in reality which objectively can be identified as true and good (Dewey 1929; 1958). Reality in Dewey's eyes cannot be static, because change would then hinder knowledge. Therefore, reality must be orchestrated in the connection or coordination of the organism with the environment (Dewey 1896; 1958). There are then "duplicate versions of reality . . ." (Dewey 1958:49), and all are objective realities, not subjective (Dewey 1958; Mead 1926). What is most important is that moral and ethical solutions to problems, or even identifying phenomena as 'problems,' would require researchers to follow Peirce's lead by knowing as much about something as possible (Rucker 1969).

Christian Sociology

Within Christian sociology, many of the moral and ethical arguments were based upon Christian values (see Ellwood 1910; 1925; 1929; 1940; Sumner 1883; 1910). This was particularly evident in the Social Gospel movement that used Christian ethics to address the various social ills of the day. Shailer Mathews was no different. The goal in part was to connect the words of Jesus and other biblical lessons to natural laws (Mathews 1924), thereby showing all that God created. These Christian ethicists had an early influence within the ranks of the social sciences, though they did struggle to mesh or integrate completely with any particular discipline (Bernard 1930). As Bernard stated, "the Christian ethics or moral philosophy viewpoint maintained itself so strongly that in large measure it refused to assimilate with the new sociology and took refuge particularly in the theological seminaries and in Harvard University, where gradually it adopted an applied sociological content without giving up its name" (1930:46). These social scientists were critics of the social problems of the day, and gradually worked their way into having a say

in many of the social sciences. Though advocates such as Shailer Mathews, Amy Tanner, and Charles Ellwood encouraged a Christian sociology, it never became a dominant force within the discipline.

Shailer Mathews

Shailer Mathews was known to be one of the country's most visible and articulate advocates for integrating social concerns as an essential part of the Gospel message. His insistence upon a more objective reading of biblical texts, free from the assumptions of conservative Christianity, placed him at the center of the emerging debate between liberal Christianity and the new fundamentalism.

The president of the University of Chicago, William Rainey Harper brought Mathews to the University of Chicago from Colby College as part of his plan to place religious studies on equal footing with other academic inquiries. Theologically, Mathews stood to the left of most orthodox Protestant theologians who tended to accept more Social Darwinist ideologies. At the same time, he did not deny evolutionary possibilities nor the value of non-interference (Mathews 1896a). However, like Pragmatists, Mathews saw the ideas associated with evolution to suggest process as the key in understanding life. He openly embraced the role of scientific inquiry and argued that religion had nothing to fear from science. Mathews agreed with early American sociologists that the goal for sociology was to make the world a better place, and to create a utopian existence. His connection to sociology then becomes obvious.

Mathews' inclusion in accounts of the origins of American sociology is cemented by his frequent appearances in the *American Journal of Sociology*; an article penned by Mathews was published in each of the first eight issues of the journal. Mathews attempted to show that Christian and sociological ideas were not mutually exclusive (1895). It was his view that no one had addressed the words of Jesus scientifically in the same manner as the words of other people throughout history had been addressed scientifically (Mathews 1895). While Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and others were typical subjects of scientific investigation for the understanding of social life and existence, the words of Jesus appeared to be off-limits. What Mathews proceeded to do in seven of the eight articles was create a foundation for the creation of a Christian sociology by focusing on the words of Jesus. His seven topics included the individual, society, the family, wealth, social life, forces of human progress, and the process of social regeneration. On each of these topics, he followed the words of Jesus and attempted to explain the importance of Jesus for sociology and for life in general.

Mathews agreed with the more liberal, pragmatic views being circulated at the time.

People such as John Dewey, James Angell, George Herbert Mead, Amy Tanner, Alfred Whitehead, Jane Addams, and Albion Small at the University of Chicago all shared similar social philosophical views regarding the nature of reality. Insofar as the ideas and goals of these individuals interacted and overlapped so much, it is not surprising that Mathews' discussion of the intersection of Christianity with sociology would be consistent with the ideas found in the writings and research of others at Chicago. Though Mathews discussed seven different categories, they can be condensed into three main themes: interconnectedness, social justice, and transformation. Doing so avoids overlap while still encompassing the whole of the seven categories Mathews discussed. What becomes evident is that Shailer Mathews' view of Christian sociology makes it possible to address issues of morality and ethics within sociology.

Interconnectedness

Mathews begins his treatise on Christian sociology by discussing the role of the individual. Consistent with pragmatism, he makes the point that one cannot separate the individual from society; neither can exist without the presence of the other. This line of thought was expounded by many at the University of Chicago, as well as others who adopted the ideas of Peirce (see Dewey 1896; Follett 1918; Mead 1926). The critical point for Mathews is that the Christian church had gone against the laws of nature by separating the individual from society, and thereby not acknowledging the laws of nature. "Scriptural teachings have been applied to men as if they were insulated entities, and to society as if it were an aggregation of easily separated wholes" (Mathews 1895:71). According to Mathews, the ideas of the Christian church at that time were more or less consistent with those of Descartes and Kant, who both stated that ontological dualism allowed for the divergent qualities of humans when compared to the rest of creation. Humans were separate from other organisms because people were made in the image of God. This dualism allowed for the mind and soul to be exempt from study due to their spiritual or metaphysical qualities.

These ideas, specifically the ideas of Descartes, were much different from the social aspect of humanity espoused throughout the early writings of the Chicago school, as well as those of Peirce. To discuss the individual separate from society was meaningless insofar as both were contingent upon the other (Dewey 1929; 1958; Dewey and Bentley 1964; Follett 1918; Mead 1929; Tanner 1904). The perspective was that existence was in a state of constant process, and to be continuous within that process would mean that one has to be social (Follett 1918; Mead 1926; 1929). Stasis would go against the laws of nature. Mathews agreed with the 'social' nature of humanity as seen in the ideas of the philosopher Philo, who wrote,

Man . . . is a social animal by nature. Therefore, he must live not only by himself, but parents, brothers, wife, children, relatives and friends, for the members of his deme and of his tribe, for his country, for his race, for all of mankind. Nay, he must live for the parts of the whole, and also for the entire world, and much more for the Father and the Creator. If he is, indeed possessed of reason, he must be sociable, he must love the world and God, that of God he may be beloved. (In Montefiore 1895:501)

Mathews saw this in the teachings of Jesus. He in turn wrote,

[Jesus'] followers are through him to be one, not only with each other, but with God. In his Father's home were, to use his incomparable figure, many mansions, in which he and they were to live. And in his invitation so artistically introduced by Matthew, there is proffered to the weary and the heavy laden a companionship that shall at once make them yoke fellows with himself and friends of the Father. (Mathews 1895a:189)

Mathews saw the process of existence that God created as being designed to facilitate the social capacities of humans. God created an existence where, to reach its peak, one must work toward the good of the whole. Everything must work toward helping each other. In doing so, to be Christian is to recognize one's connection with everything else. To be saved, people would have to be brought back to the flock. To reach full potential, they must be returned to the whole. Mathews is consistent with pragmatists on the importance and necessity of integration into the whole (See Dewey 1929; Follett 1918; Mead 1926).

According to Mathews, this was the complete opposite to what was operative within many Christian or religious circles in which the goal was to seek isolation (Mathews 1895a). In doing so, individuals were fragmented, and consequently lacked the opportunity to reach full potential. One need look no further than the evils or sins of segregation found in Jim Crow laws, the reservation system imposed on Native Americans, or the forced institutionalization of people with disabilities for clear examples of this phenomenon.

The opposite of living a Christian life, or a life that is consistent with natural law, would manifest itself through being separated from the whole. Sin, according to Mathews, is a lack of sociability. It is selfish, greedy, and unsocial; it creates an 'us versus them' mentality and/or existence. According to Mathews' view, slavery, Jim Crow, the Holocaust, or in more recent years, American foreign policy and the politics of separation and isolation go against natural law, and are therefore sinful.

Not only is this a sinful life, but by going against natural laws, humans lose the opportunity to experience life to its fullest. As Mathews states,

The degeneration of the social nature that arises from the neglect of social duties, unfits a man for, or participation in, the enjoyments of the ideal life. Selfishness, that is, an over-developed individualism must according to the laws of nature result in abnormality and consequent suffering. As long as a kingdom and a brotherhood are the goal of human effort, so long must man be capable of social life, and sociability a characteristic element of a normal man. (Mathews 1895a:192)

Because of this creation, the ‘end game’ of social behavior is the creation of society, the inclusion of everyone and everything as well as seeing the whole as part of the natural (Follett 1918; Mathews 1895b). This view is consistent with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s, as well as the civil unrest in 2020. The goal is not only to treat everyone equally, but to include everyone as part of the whole. Thus, humans are all one, together. Mathews identifies this as something handed down by God. The unity of humanity is both natural and divine (Mathews 1896). However, this union is not something to be taken for granted. Instead, it is a process; union suggests the process and act of unifying. Once people stop unifying, the union dissolves; this is an ongoing process.

For Mathews, however, the purpose of life goes beyond mere interaction or interpenetration. While failure to have a union with the whole causes unrest, a perfect union would require something beyond the secular. A complete union, a complete way of life that incorporates the whole, would also include a relationship with the divine. A complete life would include a twofold existence of interaction and interpenetration, as well as seeing a relationship and connection with all of existence (Mathews 1896b; 1896c; 1896d) — the existence that was created as part of the whole. This forms a complete union and communion.

Social Justice

While the Social Gospel movement was liberal in its approach—getting involved and taking part—Mathews (1896a) identifies the early Christian Church as being largely laissez-faire. For Mathews, Jesus was all about individuals finding their path. What Mathews articulated was that, if people followed the teachings of Jesus, they would be impacted individually through being interconnected. What would be needed was a consensus of individuals regarding what needs to be done societally to help the most people. Jesus’ life was devoted to the welfare of others (Mathews 1896d). Therefore, what is seen within these teachings, or in how Jesus led his life, is that when following the right path there would be moral imperatives, which if followed, would lead to social justice. In the views of Jesus, no one is better than another; we are all equal.

If individuals or groups are no better than each other, people must recognize the

contributions that can be made if everyone is given opportunity. The development of any thing or object was paramount for those at the University of Chicago, and was a guiding force for the lab schools at Chicago and Hull House. People could not be successful without opportunity. Therefore, it was imperative that everyone be given a chance. Mathews writes,

It seems but the corollary of this discrimination when Jesus called upon his disciples to share their wealth with the poor. Such of them as had property were bidden to sell it and to give alms, and no one who asked for aid was to be denied. The young man who had lived an exemplary life from his youth was told that if he would be perfect he should sell what he had and give to the poor . . . Nor was this sharing of wealth to be limited to alms-giving. In lending no interest was to be charged. To seek gain through loans would be to place the lender on a level with sinners. And charity was not only to be extended, it was to be enjoyed. (1896a:781)

Equating the lenders to sinners who charge interest makes sense when looking at the whole. Charging interest would suggest that one is separate, therefore the need to make a distinction. In doing so, people would go against the laws of nature by working against a divine creation. Instead, the wealthy person, or those who have the ability to lend money, should do so in order to facilitate social order and move toward the Kingdom of God (Mathews 1896a). People were to have no masters, nor were they to be masters. Jesus' practice of washing the feet of his followers, a demonstration of the first being last and the last being first, is an example of such a revolutionary belief. Everyone should be willing to do whatever it takes to assist in the collective whole. No group is better or worse than the other, except when that group tries to distinguish itself from everyone else. When that occurs, the result is fragmentation.

Mathews (1896a) is clear in explaining that this does not imply that money or wealth are bad, or that those following the teachings of Jesus should practice asceticism. Instead, Mathews points out that one of the failings of the Church has been admonishing its members to avoid wealth. He points to Jesus saying that people cannot serve two masters as the key in understanding his meanings. According to Mathews, wealth can also make things possible. The goal of wealth is to use it to help others, to make the lives of others better (Mathews 1896a). Therefore, wealth is not inherently bad, but rather, it can provide opportunities for others.

Transformation

Inevitably for Mathews, if there is to be social justice in the world, people would not look to Jesus as if His teachings were a 'how-to' text. The expectation would instead be a complete buy-in to an entire lifestyle and value system. Consequently, this buy-in would lead to a transformation whereby there would "be formed a body whose ideals were to be noble and

fraternal. They were to be the same individuals, but transformed; no longer the enemies one of another, but brothers, each looking not alone to his own affairs but also in the spirit of helpfulness to the affairs of another” (Mathews 1896d:419). This transformation would occur, as Mathews says, ‘organically’, whereby people adjust and adapt to the world around them, as expected in pragmatism. This process would parallel that found throughout nature, that is, one of gradual growth. It cannot be accomplished within a generation. Moreover, Mathews did not think that such reformation could occur ‘en masse’ but, rather, one person at a time until there was a “nucleus of a more perfect social life” (1896d:423). From there, interconnectedness would build toward creating a much better world or utopia.

Socialization was key in this area. Public opinion would be swayed gradually as more and more individuals were transformed. In this process, a more fraternal form of behaviors would emerge, and people would begin looking out and taking responsibility for each other. In essence, the growth and transformation had to be moral or, as Mathews noted, “men cannot reach that divine sonship in which fraternal love becomes natural so long as the spirit of selfishness rules them” (Mathews 1896d:422). Once this transformation is complete, the process would come full circle. As part of this process, the transformed would see they are interconnected with everyone and everything around them, thereby discarding selfishness and taking responsibility for each other.

Mathews found this process exemplified in family life. He said that “the family is regarded by Jesus as one manifestation of the essential social character of men. The sexes complement one another as the two halves of a whole” (1896:457). The family serves many purposes. There is the connection within the family that illustrates how society should or could function. Like Dewey’s functional psychology, the purpose that people have is identified in the groups to which they belong. The family, workplace, and friendships all serve various functions and processes demonstrating how people come together and show interconnectedness, social justice, and transformation. Therefore, small groups such as the family unit serve as a microcosm of the transformation that would ultimately lead to interconnectedness of all peoples, and create the Kingdom of God.

Conclusion

In examining the similarities between the ideas of Mathews and the pragmatism of Peirce, as implemented by the philosophers and social scientists at the University of Chicago, there is tremendous overlap and application of Peircean pragmatism evident in Christian sociology. Instead of stopping at ‘natural law’ as academics within pragmatism did in identifying

parameters for existence and process, Mathews attributes natural law and related processes to a divine being. Being consistent with this point of view then, a Christian sociology emerging out of pragmatism would recognize that 1) there is a foundation for all that is, specifically a divine being, 2) that process is the guiding force found within all existence, 3) that humans were created to be social, 4) that one cannot differentiate between the individual and society, 5) that the group is an intrinsic part of natural law, and lastly, 6) that morals emerge from the processes found in the universe.

In this sense then, the differences that exist between the ideas of Mathews on processes and those of other pragmatist social thinkers such as Peirce, Dewey, and Mead, are relatively minor. It would be possible, indeed likely, to create a Christian sociology equal to secular sociology. The ideas of Mathews on a Christian sociology also include morality and ethics, allowing for the words of Jesus to ring true. By focusing on everything as objective reality, social issues would become tangible and more meaningful.

The goal of this paper has been to demonstrate how the origins of American sociology and many of the early social thinkers, specifically the pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce, were consistent with and influenced the ideas of Shailer Mathews and his quest for a Christian sociology. Mathews incorporated many elements of their works into his own, thus making his ideas, that is a Christian sociology, consistent with a secular sociology.

The ideas of Mathews also avoid some of the pitfalls of constructionist sociologies that devolve into a focus on words and little else. While a focus on words is important, the ideas of Mathews acknowledge that reality is so much more. Mathews avoids the fallacy associated with constructionism where, if taken to its logical extreme, people could not know more than their own thoughts. Yet Mathews still accounts for a more diversified world, that is, one that is processual, yet real. He advocates for an area of study that would force sociologists to learn so much more about the world around them, including recognizing the validity of other areas of study, consistent with Comte and the early sociologists. In the end, the goal is to find ways of study, of framing an understanding of the world around us, that yields solutions to problems, recognizing right and wrong, and bringing into being a more social, and yes, civilized world. In the process, a union and communion with the whole emerges, as Jesus advocated.

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Direct correspondence to Dr. David G. LoConto at dloconto@nmsu.edu